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UNCLAS KINSHASA 000355

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: MONUC PURSUES MILITIA INVOLVED IN PEACEKEEPERS' KILLINGS

REF: KINSHASA 337

1. (SBU) According to MONUC sources, a contingent of 242 Pakistani special peacekeeping forces on March 1 conducted a military operation against the Front for National Integration (FNI) in Djugu territory, Ituri. These sources said that MONUC engaged over 100 militia and inflicted "heavy casualties" on their camp, although at this point there are no specific figures. The operation involved the use of attack helicopters and armored personnel carriers. Two peacekeepers were injured during the engagement and have been evacuated to South Africa for medical treatment. Both are expected to recover. Reports have linked the FNI and Patriotic Force of Resistance in Ituri (FRPI) militias to the brutal killings of nine Bangladeshi peacekeepers on February 25 in the outskirts of Kafe, Ituri (reftel).

2. (SBU) MONUC sources also report that on March 1st, peacekeepers arrested FNI military commander Etienne Lona. Other FNI leaders arrested in Kinshasa in the past few days include the group's president, Floribert Njabu, and commander Goda Sopka. The commander of the FRPI, Germain Katanga, a close ally of the Lendu FNI, is also in government custody.

3. (U) MONUC held a memorial service for the nine slain Bangladeshi peacekeepers at its Kinshasa headquarters March 1st. All four Congolese Vice-Presidents (Jean Pierre Bemba, Azarias Ruberwa, Arthur Zahidi Ngoma, and Abdulaye Yerodia) as well as the Ministers of Interior, Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Information, attended the service. CIAT members, including the Ambassador, and representatives of troop-contributing countries were also present. SRSG William Swing and other MONUC speakers eulogized the peacekeepers and emphasized the mission's unshaken commitment to the cause of peace in the DRC.

4. (U) Bujumbura minimized considered.
MEECE